
SECTION: BREASTFEEDING**SUBJECT: Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program****ITEM: Peer Counselors: Requirements and Responsibilities**

Policy

All local agencies (LAs) with a Breastfeeding Peer Counseling (BPC) Program shall hire Peer Counselors (PCs) who meet USDA requirements. PCs shall provide BPC Program services in one-on-one and group settings for BPC Program participants, with a goal of increasing breastfeeding initiation, exclusivity and duration rates. PCs shall be trained and work under the supervision of the PC Supervisor / International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC).

Qualifications

- I. PCs:
 - A. are paraprofessionals;
 - B. are enthusiastic about breastfeeding and have a desire to share that enthusiasm;
 - C. are recruited and hired from the target population;
 - D. have excellent communication skills;
 - E. have successfully breastfed at least one baby; and
 - F. speak the same language as the target population.

Responsibilities

- I. PCs shall provide the following services with BPC Program participants:
 - A. provide basic breastfeeding information and support to pregnant and breastfeeding mothers;
 - B. counsel pregnant and breastfeeding mothers to help avoid common breastfeeding problems;
 - C. maintain regular contact (telephone, in person, in hospital, at home, email, text, etc.) in accordance with the frequency intervals in *WPM 630-13 (Contacts)*;
 - D. provide support and information to breastfeeding mothers who are working or going to school;

- E. document all counseling encounters in the Peer Counselor Database and develop a procedure for identifying PC participants in ISIS or another location that allows all non-PC staff to easily identify the participant's PC;
- F. teach use, cleaning, and assembly of breast pumps, in addition to expression and storage of human milk as needed, however PCs do not clean breast pumps;
- G. facilitate post-partum breastfeeding support groups for BPC Program participants; and
- H. make immediate referrals to the IBCLC, healthcare professionals or other community resources, according to the LA's established referral protocol, when they encounter:
 - a. breastfeeding problems outside of the normal breastfeeding experience;
 - b. breastfeeding problems that are not resolved within 24-48 hours of their intervention; or
 - c. problems in an area other than breastfeeding.

Definitions

Paraprofessional – Those without extended professional training in health, nutrition or the clinical management of breastfeeding who are selected from the group to be served and are trained and given ongoing supervision to provide a basic service or function. Paraprofessionals provide specific tasks within a defined scope of practice. They assist professionals, but are not licensed or credentialed as healthcare, nutrition, or lactation consultant professionals.

PC/WNA – A model of BPC Program where the PCs also have completed WNA certification process (see *WPM 130-30*) and are funded by regular WIC funds and USDA BPC Program funds and thus provide both WNA and PC services. Time studies must clearly indicate the separation of hours of these dual-role positions and they must meet the definition of a PC. For more information on time studies see Chapter 12 of the Contract Management Binder.

Authority

All State Memorandum (ASM) 04-27 – Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Grants/Training, April 8, 2004

Loving Support© Through Peer Counseling: A Journey Together – for WIC Managers, USDA, November, 2011

Loving Support© Frequently Asked Questions 2011

Loving Support© Model for a Successful Peer Counseling Program